CHAP. VIII.

MORALITY UNDERMINED BY SEXUAL NOTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD REPUTATION.

It has long ſince occurred to me that advice reſpecting behaviour, and all the various modes of preſerving a good reputation, which have been ſo ſtrenuouſly inculcated on the female world, were ſpecious poiſons, that incruſting morality eat away the ſubſtance. And, that this meaſuring of ſhadows produced a falſe calculation, becauſe their length depends ſo much on the height of the ſun, and other adventitious circumſtances.

From whence ariſes the eaſy fallacious behaviour of a courtier? From his ſituation, undoubtedly: for ſtanding in need of dependents, he is obliged to learn the art of denying without giving offence, and, of evaſively feeding hope with the chameleon's food: thus does politeneſs ſport with truth, and eating

eating away the ſincerity and humanity natural to man, produce the fine gentleman.

Women in the ſame way acquire, from a ſuppoſed neceſſity, an equally artificial mode of behaviour. Yet truth is not with impunity to be ſported with, for the practiſed diſſembler, at laſt, become the dupe of his own arts, loſes that ſagacity, which has been juſtly termed common ſenſe; namely, a quick perception of common truths: which are conſtantly received as ſuch by the unſophiſticated mind, though it might not have had ſufficient energy to diſcover them itſelf, when obſcured by local prejudices. The greater number of people take their opinions on truſt to avoid the trouble of exerciſing their own minds, and theſe indolent beings naturally adhere to the letter, rather than the ſpirit of a law, divine or human. 'Women,' ſays ſome author, I cannot recollect who, 'mind 'not what only heaven ſees.' Why, indeed ſhould they? it is the eye of man that they have been taught to dread—and if they can lull their Argus to ſleep, they ſeldom think of heaven or themſelves, becauſe their reputation is ſafe; and it is reputation, not chaſtity and all its fair train, that they are employed